

Southern Plains Network

Biological Inventory and Vital Signs Monitoring Program

CHARTER

I. Background and Purpose

This charter describes the process used to plan, manage, and evaluate the inventory and monitoring (I&M) program within the Southern Plains Network (SOPN) in accordance with the intent and purpose of the National Park Service (NPS) Natural Resource Challenge (NRC). The NRC strategy requires the development of an integrated monitoring program that includes short-term tactical monitoring as well as long-term monitoring.

The I&M program will provide scientifically sound information for managing park resources and informing the public. Such information will allow managers to confront and mitigate threats to the parks and operate more effectively in regulatory, legal, and political arenas. The program will develop broad-based scientific information on the current status and long-term trends in the composition, structure and function of park ecosystems.

In an October 13, 2000 memorandum, the Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, outlined the vision and implementation plan for vital signs monitoring in parks and networks (Attachment A). This NPS strategy implementing the Natural Resource Challenge includes the creation of 32 park networks linked by geography and shared natural resource characteristics. The networks will facilitate collaboration, information sharing, and economies of scale in natural resource management. Each network will receive approximately 8-9 new positions, supplemented by additional positions for air and water quality monitoring where appropriate, and a set amount of funding each year to develop a core program for park vital signs monitoring. Parks in each network will share these positions and funds. The level of funding available will not allow comprehensive monitoring in all parks, but will provide parks with a foundation for natural resource monitoring that can be built upon through future efforts. This program will be leveraged with additional personnel and funding from other sources to build a successful inventory and long-term monitoring program.

The SOPN is comprised of 11 park units in the states of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. All of the parks are located in the Intermountain Region (IMR) with the exception of Fort Larned National Historic Site, which is located in the Midwest Region (MWR).

<i>Southern Plains Network</i>	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site (BEOL) Capulin Volcano National Monument (CAVO) Chickasaw National Recreation Area (CHIC) Fort Larned National Historic Site (FOLS) Fort Union National Monument (FOUN) Lake Meredith National Recreation Area (LAMR) Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument (ALFL) Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (LYJO) Pecos National Historical Park (PECO) Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site (SAND) Washita Battlefield National Historic Site (WABA)
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A Study Plan for Inventories, which directs the multi-year inventory effort in the SOPN, was completed in November 2000. Inventory funding is provided through the NRC. Inventory efforts have been coordinated by representatives of SOPN parks under the guidance of the IMR I&M Coordinator.

The purpose of this charter is to define how the SOPN Network is organized to carry out an exemplary I&M Program.

II. Organization and Responsibilities

A multi-level organizational structure will ensure the effectiveness of the SOPN I&M Program. The organization is comprised of a Board of Directors, Technical Committee, Scientific Panels, and Network Staff.

Board of Directors (BOD)

The SOPN Board of Directors provides *guidance, oversight and advocacy* toward development and implementation of the I&M Program for 11 park units within the network.

Major responsibilities of the BOD are as follows:

- Approve the five-year strategic plan and review it annually.
- Promote accountability by reviewing progress and quality control for the network.
- Review and approve program budgets.
- Review and approve hiring and work plans developed by the Technical Committee.
- Review network charter every three years.
- Provide oversight for NEPA/NHPA compliance and research permits.
- Hold annual BOD meeting.
- Advocate an active and effective I&M Program in the network.
- Decide on strategies for leveraging network funds and personnel to best accomplish the natural resource inventory, long-term monitoring, and other needs of network parks.
- Provide input to supervisor of the Technical Committee Chairperson for performance appraisals.

- Promote collaboration with Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units.
- Ensure that the network work is integrated with park resource management programs and other NPS natural resource funding initiatives.
- Facilitate communication and coordination about network activities with park managers in the network and region. Serve as liaison to Cluster Leadership Councils and Natural Resource Communication Advisory Team.
- Identify and develop internal and external partnerships to further the goals of the NRC and I&M Program.

Membership. The BOD represents Superintendents from the 11 parks within the SOPN, and should reflect the diversity in size and character of the network parks. The membership of the BOD includes three superintendents, who shall serve three-year terms. Additional members shall include a resource manager or, in the case of a park that does not have a resource manager, a representative designated by the superintendent. All resource managers shall serve two-year terms. The terms of each superintendent and resource manager shall begin on January 1 of any given year and end on December 31. The terms of the superintendents and resource managers are initially staggered to achieve the desired rotation; these terms are delineated in Attachment B.

Additional members of the BOD are the SOPN Network Coordinator and the IMR I&M Coordinator. To facilitate coordination with Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU), the unit leaders from the Great Plains and Gulf Coast CESUs are designated as ex-officio members. There will be no officers of the BOD. A park superintendent shall serve as the chair and will be elected by the BOD. The chair will be elected for a one-year term corresponding to the fiscal year.

Procedures. The BOD will foster an atmosphere of professionalism and cooperation throughout the SOPN Network. It will operate in an atmosphere of fairness, trust, and respect. Procedural and reporting requirements are coordinated at the network level adhering to guidelines established by the WASO I&M program. The SOPN Network Coordinator facilitates meetings and communications to BOD members.

Formal BOD meetings will occur annually. Additionally, three members of the BOD can jointly request meetings of the BOD. Formal meetings require distribution of a written agenda at least two weeks before the meeting. At the end of each meeting, members of the BOD responsible for arranging the logistics and agenda for the next meeting will be designated. Network members are welcome to attend any meeting. Any BOD member may call telephone conference meetings. Electronic mail messages will provide information to all members and resolve simple matters.

Any BOD member who cannot attend or otherwise participate in a BOD meeting may assign an alternate. A BOD member cannot serve as the alternate, or carry the proxy for an absent member. Four BOD members constitute a quorum. Ex-officio members may designate an alternate if desired.

The BOD shall strive for consensus decision. Consensus is defined as an outcome that all BOD members can live with if not ideal from any one viewpoint. When consensus decisions cannot be reached, a majority vote would be sufficient. In case of a tie vote, the BOD will table the

issue at hand and the three superintendents will poll all network superintendents. A majority vote of the network superintendents shall decide the issue at hand. Superintendents representing more than one park unit will be allotted one vote.

Recommendations will identify the responsible individual(s) and deadlines as appropriate. Meeting minutes will be distributed to BOD members, the SOPN superintendents, the Technical Committee and the SOPN Network staff.

Technical Committee (TC)

The SOPN Technical Committee is responsible for developing the specific I&M program plans, budgets and hiring proposals that are presented to the BOD for review and approval. Where the BOD has responsibility for approval of program goals on a broad scale, the TC is responsible for the detailed technical formulation and execution of the program. The TC is accountable to the BOD for all activities and products.

Major responsibilities of the TC are as follows:

- Prepare a five-year strategic plan for BOD review and approval.
- Compile and summarize existing information about park resources.
- Host scoping workshops and other outreach efforts as needed to develop the Network monitoring plan.
- Solicit professional guidance, from scientific panel members, individuals, and other organizations, as needed.
- Review proposals for hiring network staff prior to BOD approval.
- Review annual network accomplishment report and annual work plan in detail prior to BOD approval.
- Develop vital signs monitoring plan in collaboration with SOPN Coordinator; complete detailed review of long-term and annual I&M plans prior to BOD approval.
- Develop and foster partnerships that support overall I&M objectives.
- Organize and facilitate periodic program reviews.
- Integrate environmental compliance activities, as required by federal law and NPS policy, into the development of study plans and the park project approval process.
- Work with park staff in areas such as cultural resources or interpretation to build support for an integrated I&M program.
- Ensure that the network work is fully integrated with park resource management programs and other NPS natural resource funding initiatives.

Membership. The TC is comprised of a representative from each park in the SOPN Network and the SOPN Network Coordinator. Park superintendents will appoint representatives. They will serve on the TC until the appointing official designates a new member.

Procedures. The TC will meet in person at least once per year, which may include the annual BOD meeting. These meetings will be supplemented by conference calls as necessary. The resource manager currently serving on the BOD chairs the TC. The chair will serve a two-year term. Serving as the TC Chair will represent a substantial commitment of time and effort, which will be reflected in a task agreement between the BOD Chair and the TC Chair's supervisor. The

task agreement will be developed outline the responsibilities of the technical committee chair and include an estimate of the time commitment and other expectations of the position.

The SOPN Network Coordinator will assist the TC chair in scheduling and organizing meetings. Five TC members constitute a quorum. TC meetings are open to all interested park staff and BOD members. It is the goal that all decisions are made by consensus. Where this is not feasible, a majority vote will be used as an alternate means of arriving at a decision. Meeting notes will document all committee decisions for circulation to the TC members and the BOD.

Scientific Panels

Scientific panels assist the network with planning for vital signs monitoring and provide scientific peer review. Panels will be appointed as needed and configured to address scientific topics and issues, which will be stated at the time of the panel's establishment. Panels may vary in size and length of service. Scientific panel members represent key disciplines (biological, physical, etc.) and may include federal scientists, academic institutions and other relevant organizations. Panel members should have knowledge of sampling procedures, monitoring techniques and statistical methods in order to evaluate conceptual designs, monitoring strategies and the ecological relevance of monitoring proposals.

The primary purpose of the scientific panels will be to provide guidance to the TC in the design and implementation of inventory projects and vital signs monitoring. It is expected that the CESUs will help facilitate linkages with the local scientific community. Meetings with panel members will be scheduled as needed. The SOPN Network Coordinator will facilitate and chair panel meetings. The products and recommendations of the scientific panels will be presented to the BOD for review and final approval.

Network Staff

Staffing the SOPN Network is limited by funding realities. Current and projected funding requires the SOPN Network to work with reduced staffing. A fully funded network I&M program is envisioned to have a staff of 8 to 9 FTEs. It may take several years for the SOPN to receive funding to reach this ideal level of staffing. Some positions will likely be housed in a central network location and others will be stationed in individual parks. Details of staffing needs, including supervision and duty stations, will be addressed in the network monitoring plan and approved by the BOD.

The SOPN Network Coordinator works to support the BOD and TC in meeting the goals of the I&M Program for the Network. In addition to serving on the BOD and TC, the Network Coordinator will chair any scientific panels that are established. The Network Coordinator will be responsible for many of the administrative and communication functions of the Network. The network coordinator will prepare annual network I&M accomplishment report and work plan for Technical Committee and BOD review and approval. The network coordinator will also oversee the development of the network vital signs monitoring plan (long-term and annual plans) for Technical Committee and BOD review and approval.

Other critical staff for the SOPN Network includes a data manager, applied scientists and technicians for monitoring the physical environment. As the SOPN I&M program develops, these positions will be established to adapt to the growing needs of the Network.

Other Ad-hoc and Standing Committees

The BOD may form ad-hoc or standing committees to guide SOPN Network activities or implement SOPN Network projects. An Information and Education Committee comprised of interpretation, education, and public affairs staff may be formed at a later date.

III. Network Operations

Administrative Costs. In addition to the guidance provided by the “Vision and Implementation Plan” for vital signs monitoring, the SOPN Network will use the guidance provided in the November 30, 2001 memorandum regarding administrative policies from the Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (Attachment C). Administrative costs for personnel, administrative support and services, office space and equipment, and vehicles will be borne by the SOPN I&M program only as provided for in this memorandum or superseding guidance.

Annual Work Plan. Working with the SOPN Network Coordinator, the SOPN TC will present a proposed Annual Work Plan to the BOD for review and approval no later than September 15 of each year. The Annual Work Plan will assign specific accomplishments and products, responsible individuals, deadlines, and fiscal resources to parks or offices in furtherance of the strategic plan. Final funding allocations will be added to the Annual Work Plan once a budget for the SOPN Network is authorized. The BOD must approve substantial changes to the Annual Work Plan.

Annual Accomplishment Report. Working with the SOPN Network Coordinator, the SOPN TC will present an Annual Accomplishment Report to the BOD for review and final approval no later than September 15 of each year. The Annual Accomplishment Report will provide details on specific accomplishments and products, lessons learned, collaborative activities supported by alternate funding sources, and a budget summary. A detailed accounting of all I&M funds assigned to each park and office will be appended to the report. This report will be widely distributed. The Annual Accomplishment Report will be released no later than October 31 of each year. The report format will conform to WASO reporting requirements. The Network Coordinator will distribute copies of the report to the IMR, WASO and other interested parties.

Program Review. The SOPN will conduct periodic comprehensive reviews of the inventory and monitoring program to evaluate the completeness of the inventories and the adequacy of the monitoring program. The initial review will take place during the Phase III Report peer review process and will follow WASO Inventory and Monitoring national standards and administrative protocols. After the Phase III report is completed, SOPN will decide the appropriate time for the next comprehensive review.

Funding. NRC funding for the I&M program will be managed via the NR-PRO program. Funds will be distributed to the network per the network annual work plan. All I&M funds will be strictly accounted for and applied only to I&M activities approved by the BOD. In general, I&M funds will not be used for existing park positions and projects. Exceptions may be made where providing temporary salary and travel support is advantageous to meeting network work objectives. Funds contributed by parks, other NPS programs and sources that are used for I&M related work will be tracked and reported. Travel funds will be made available to members of the BOD, TC and Scientific Panels as available; however, parks are encouraged to cover their own travel costs when possible.

Data Management. Data management is an active process requiring continuous maintenance and a high degree of attention to detail. Under the I&M Program biological data management will be standardized across all SOPN parks and will comply with national data standards where applicable. The SOPN Data Manager will work with all network parks in developing a multi-year data management plan to ensure that biological spatial, tabular and bibliographic data are comparable and of high quality. It is envisioned that data repositories will be centralized, but available to all network parks. Data management responsibilities will be shared between network and park staff.

The basic goal of the NPS biological I&M program is to provide park managers with comprehensive scientifically based information about the nature and status of selected biological resources in an easily useable form. The network will place a high priority on the use of new technologies to ensure that data are easily accessible and useable.

Data management for I&M activities will conform to the philosophy that integrity, security and availability of current data sets are high priorities. All data will be certifiably accurate and be associated with metadata that describes (1) the purpose of the data, (2) the history of when, where, why, and how the data was collected and by whom, and (3) all changes and additions to established datasets.

Communication and Information Sharing. Open communication and information sharing will be emphasized in all network activities. BOD members are encouraged to participate in the work of the TC. The Network Coordinator will keep BOD and TC members and others apprised of pertinent developments relating to I&M. The Network Coordinator is responsible for maintaining the administrative record of the SOPN Network at his/her duty station, with a back-up copy kept with the IMR I&M Coordinator.

Supervision and Administrative Support. Staff hired for the SOPN Network will be supervised and administratively supported as determined by the BOD. Administrative support, not to exceed 5% of total costs, will be provided by the Network to parks hosting I&M positions. Guidance on administrative procedures can be found in Attachment C.

Budget. Each year the SOPN Network Coordinator, with the assistance of the TC, will prepare a budget to be approved by the BOD for the travel, per diem, and any other costs associated with the conduct of meetings. These costs will be summarized in the Annual Work Plan.

Monitoring Plan. A monitoring plan that identifies the management and scientific issues facing each park, the vital signs to be monitored, where they will be monitored, and why they will be monitored shall be prepared by the TC and approved by the BOD. In addition, the monitoring plan will specify the overall sampling design, staffing plan, and data management strategy.

Partnerships. The Network I&M program may evolve to include other land and resource managers (e.g. Federal, State, or Tribal) in the Southern Plains Network area. The Monitoring Plan will look into the advantage of including non-NPS partners on the network BOD. In no case will this be done without unanimous approval of the BOD as well as approval by the Intermountain Region Associate Regional Director of Resources and Science.

IV. General Provisions

Term of Charter. This charter will remain in effect throughout the duration of the NPS I&M Program.

Amendments. Any signatories, BOD members or TC member may propose changes to this charter. Proposed amendments will be considered at a meeting of the BOD within 60 days of receipt of the proposal by the BOD chair. Any change will be in the form of an amendment that must be approved by the BOD, and will not take effect until all signatories have agreed to and signed – electronically or by hard copy - the amendment.

Periodic Review. The signatories and/or BOD will review this charter at least every three years to assess its adequacy, effectiveness, and continuing need.


V. Attachments

Attachment A. Memorandum from Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, “New Park/Network Monitoring Program: Vision and Implementation Plan.” October 13, 2000.

Attachment B. Assignments to SOPN Board of Directors.

Attachment C. Memorandum from Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, “Policies Concerning Administrative Charges to Inventory and Monitoring Funding,” November 30, 2001 (with forwarding memorandum from Director, IMR).

V. Approval Signatures


 Superintendent, Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument &
 Lake Meredith National Recreation Area

11/29/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

10/7/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Capulin Volcano National Monument

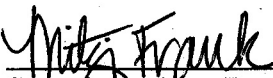
9/20/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Chickasaw National Recreation Area

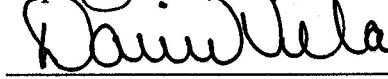
11/01/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Fort Larned National Historic Site

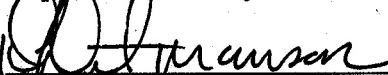
12/27/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Fort Union National Monument

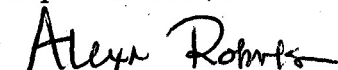
9/23/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park


11-19-04
 Date


 Superintendent, Pecos National Historical Park

9/29/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site

10/27/04
 Date


 Superintendent, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

12/20/04
 Date

VI. Concurrence

 Inventory and Monitoring Coordinator, Intermountain Region

 Date

Administration of the network approach and the NR-PRO funding model

Additional input and review is needed to explore creative solutions to managing a cooperative, collaborative network of monitoring programs and the best administrative structure for sharing technical expertise and infrastructure burdens among parks. Currently, network monitoring programs are coordinated by the Servicewide Inventory and Monitoring Program with assistance from other divisions of the Natural Resource Program Center of the Washington Office. The Servicewide I&M Program provides funding to each region for a full-time I&M coordinator, and each network is expected to hire a network coordinator, when funded.

The initial networks will be guided by a Board of Directors made up of park superintendents, the Regional I&M Coordinator, and the Network Coordinator, who will specify desired outcomes and evaluate performance for the network's monitoring program. The Board of Directors will make decisions regarding the development and implementation of the monitoring strategy, including decisions on hiring, budgeting, and scheduling, and will promote accountability for the monitoring program. The committee should be chaired by one of the superintendents, with the network I&M coordinator acting as staff to the chair to help arrange meetings and logistics, produce agendas, and coordinate between the Board of Directors and the Science Advisory committee. In general, the Board will be responsible for ensuring the overall effectiveness and success of the network's monitoring efforts. These working relationships and descriptions of the procedures the Board will use to make decisions should be codified in the form of a "Network Charter" signed by each superintendent on the Board.

A Science Advisory or technical committee comprised of natural resource managers and scientists, including scientists from outside of the NPS who work in the parks and are familiar with park issues, should be formed to provide technical assistance and advice to the Board of Directors. The Science Advisory committee should be chaired by the network monitoring coordinator and will be responsible for compiling and summarizing existing information about park resources and developing the materials needed at the scoping workshop, and will draft the workshop report and monitoring strategy for review and approval by the Board of Directors. Care needs to be taken to avoid conflicts with the Federal Advisory Committee Act in using outside scientists on advisory committees. Any non-Federal scientists should serve as ad hoc members of the committee and be limited to providing advice, rather than participating in consensus recommendations, unless the committee is established in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

The minimum critical staff for each network will include, but not be limited to, a network coordinator and data manager, 3 or 4 applied scientists, and several technicians for monitoring the physical environment (e.g., weather, air and water quality, soil erosion), aquatic/marine systems, vegetation, and wildlife. Each network will decide on the job series, grade, and duty station of network personnel. In some cases, network personnel will be based in parks and may be supervised by a park Superintendent, whereas in other networks, network personnel will be based in a central location such as a town or university and be supervised by someone in the regional office. This will be a decision between the Regional Director and the park networks. The positions and support will be

funded through the new NR-PRO program in which funding is held in base by the Servicewide I&M program and other national resource programs and will be transferred to each network on an annual basis to support the monitoring.

It is important to keep flexibility in the administrative structure because the program is expected to grow and adapt as the Service gains more experience with monitoring during the next several years. The configurations of personnel and their duty stations that provide the best support to all of the network parks will probably change over time. As the programs mature, larger parks will be able to support base-funded programs, whereas smaller parks may continue to find it advantageous to carry out monitoring through the networks. Regardless of future changes, however, networking will facilitate both efficiencies and integration of monitoring efforts, both among parks and with neighboring land managers.

Emphasis on data management and making information more available and useful

A major emphasis of the inventory and monitoring effort is to make information more readily available to decision makers and the public and to integrate natural resource information with other park operations such as interpretation and maintenance. Tools such as Synthesis, the GIS Theme Manager (aka GIS Databrowser), and Servicewide databases such as the NPSpecies database and the Natural Resource Bibliography will make information more readily available and useful to park managers, resource professionals, and others in the field. During preparations for both inventory and monitoring, the large body of existing data will be cataloged and evaluated, and the more useful datasets will be converted to modern databases and GIS products.

The public also needs better information. The public does not generally recognize or understand the significance of parks as preserves of our nation's natural heritage. The disciplines of natural resources and interpretation/education need to be better integrated throughout the National Park Service, and the public needs to be informed of the status and trends of its natural heritage preserved in the parks in simple, clear-language reports.

Recommended approach for developing a network monitoring program

The recommended approach that each network of parks should take to develop their strategy for monitoring natural resources involves seven steps:

1. Form a network Board of Directors and a Science Advisory committee.
2. Summarize existing data and understanding.
3. Prepare for and hold a scoping workshop.
4. Write a report on the workshop and have it widely reviewed.
5. Hold meetings to decide on priorities and implementation approaches.
6. Draft the monitoring strategy.
7. Have the monitoring strategy reviewed and approved.

- 1. Form a network Board of Directors and a Science Advisory committee.**

- A Board of Directors comprised of park superintendents or their designee, the regional I&M coordinator, and the network monitoring coordinator, should be formed to oversee the development of the monitoring strategy for the network. The committee will make decisions regarding the development and implementation of the monitoring strategy, including decisions on hiring, budgeting, and scheduling, and will promote accountability for the monitoring program. The committee should be chaired by one of the superintendents, and all members should have authority to make on-the-spot decisions on personnel, budgets, office space, and commitments of existing park personnel and funding to the monitoring effort. A charter should define the roles and functions of the different members and outline the process to be used to make decisions related to monitoring within the network. The charter must be signed before funding is released to the network. The network I&M coordinator should act as staff to the chair to help arrange meetings and logistics, produce agendas, and coordinate between the Board of Directors and the technical committee.
- A Science Advisory or technical committee comprised of natural resource managers and scientists, including scientists from outside of the NPS who work in the parks and are familiar with park issues, should be formed to provide technical assistance and advice to the Board of Directors. The Science Advisory committee should be chaired by the network monitoring coordinator and will be responsible for compiling and summarizing existing information about park resources and developing the materials needed at the scoping workshop, and will draft the workshop report and monitoring strategy for review and approval by the Board of Directors.

2. Summarize existing data and understanding.

- One of the most important steps in the process of developing a monitoring strategy is the task of identifying, summarizing, and evaluating existing information and understanding of park ecosystems. Much of this needs to be done before the scoping workshop is held.
- To accomplish this task, it is anticipated that most networks will need to hire, assign or contract at least one or two full-time persons (e.g., a Monitoring Coordinator and data management specialist) and allow at least a year prior to the scoping workshop for this step to be accomplished.
- This step will include a literature review, a review of the Resource Management Plan (RMP), General Management Plan (GMP), and other applicable plans for each park, and an inventory of existing datasets and other information on park ecosystems.
- Superintendents and other park managers should be interviewed regarding the key management issues facing their park and the types of information they need from the monitoring program.
- Current or historical monitoring of natural processes and resources in each park should be summarized, including data from monitoring of fire effects, T&E species, water quality, air quality, physical processes/changes, and other resources. Data sets and the sampling design used should be evaluated to determine whether the monitoring is meeting the needs of park managers and is providing reliable and credible data to help manage the park. Maps showing the locations where monitoring has occurred should be prepared.
- Monitoring that is being conducted by neighboring agencies, partners, and related parks should be identified and summarized to help determine where comparable data sets and sampling protocols exist.

- Where understanding exists regarding cause-effect relationships between environmental stressors and the park's natural resources, or where the linkages among ecosystem components are understood, draft conceptual models should be prepared to help summarize this understanding.

3. Prepare for and hold a scoping workshop.

- A scoping workshop should be held to obtain additional input and peer review of existing information and understanding of park ecosystems from park managers and subject experts from within and outside of the NPS.
- In preparation for the workshop, the monitoring coordinator and technical committee will be responsible for preparing handouts, maps, and presentations of the material summarized in Step #2.
- The monitoring coordinator and technical committee should define the goals and preliminary objectives of the monitoring program prior to the scoping workshop. The goals and objectives should be approved by the Board of Directors.
- Additional material that should be developed prior to the scoping workshop include:
 - ✓ Draft lists of important management issues for each park;
 - ✓ Draft lists of important natural resources and focal species or processes for each park;
 - ✓ Draft lists of known stressors that may cause changes in park resources;
 - ✓ Draft conceptual models of portions of the park ecosystem;
 - ✓ Draft list of measurable objectives for the monitoring program;
 - ✓ Criteria for indicator selection.
- Workshop participants will be asked to review the material prepared for the workshop and provide additional input and understanding, including additional development and modification of conceptual models.
- Participants will also be asked to identify and provide an initial prioritization of potential indicators to be monitored by the network. Include short-term, tactical monitoring as well as long-term monitoring needs.
- Participants will also indicate where appropriate sampling methodologies exist, and where there is a need to develop new sampling protocols for the high-priority indicators that are identified.
- A three-day workshop with facilitated breakout sessions focusing on different components of the park ecosystem is recommended.

4. Write a report on the workshop and have it widely reviewed.

- The results of the scoping workshop should be widely circulated for additional input and comment. It should be sent to all interested parties, including people that did not attend the scoping workshop.
- The additional input provided through the review process should be incorporated into the final version of the workshop report.

5. Hold one or more meetings to decide on priorities and implementation approaches.

- The Board of Directors, based on recommendations of the Science Advisory committee, should meet to make decisions regarding priorities for monitoring and how to implement the monitoring strategy within the network

- The set of indicators that will be monitored by the network should be selected based on the preliminary list of indicators developed during the scoping and review process, and the availability of funding and personnel from the I&M program and other sources (e.g., base funding from parks, partnerships).
- Decisions should be made on which sampling protocols are most appropriate for the network. Where protocols already exist, they may need to be adapted for the particular conditions within the network. In cases where no suitable protocol exists, the committee and managers should decide on an approach for developing these protocols through contracts or technical workshops.
- Staffing issues should be addressed at this meeting. Each network will hire a number of professional-level monitoring specialists and technicians that will be shared by the network parks, and decisions should be made regarding the appropriate job series and grade level of these positions and where they should be stationed.
- The Science Advisory committee and Board of Directors should discuss data management and reporting issues. Experience from the prototype monitoring parks indicates that at least 30% of the total resources should be allocated to data management and reporting. A data management plan needs to be developed before the final monitoring strategy is approved.

6. Draft the monitoring strategy.

- A report describing the monitoring strategy and the various tasks and decisions that contributed to the final selection of indicators to be monitored by the network should be written by the technical committee. This document describing the monitoring strategy should include the following:
 - ✓ An overview of each park and its natural resources, including a summary of the park's enabling legislation, the park's natural resources in a regional or national context, and a summary of the important natural resources in each park;
 - ✓ A summary of the management issues and scientific issues facing each park, including stressors or other agents of change that affect park resources;
 - ✓ A summary of the understanding of the park ecosystem, including conceptual models developed during the scoping and review process;
 - ✓ Descriptions of the indicators to be monitored by the network and the sampling protocols that will be used, including justification for why these were selected. The report should also list and describe the indicators that were considered but not selected for monitoring, and the reasons why they were not selected;
 - ✓ The overall statistical sampling design for the network;
 - ✓ The staffing plan;
 - ✓ Data management plan, including how often reports will be generated and who will be responsible for ensuring that results are provided to managers in a timely manner.

7. Have the monitoring strategy reviewed and approved.

- The draft monitoring strategy document should undergo a peer review by the managers and scientists involved in its development and the network Board of Directors, and then be forwarded through the regional office to the Servicewide I&M Program for final review and acceptance before it is fully implemented.

Attachment B

Assignments to SOPN Board of Directors

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
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SUPERINTENDENTS

BEOL/SAND	X	X				X	X	X				X
FOLS			X	X	X				X	X	X	
PECO/FOUN			X	X				X	X	X		
CAVO	X	X	X		X	X	X				X	X
CHIC	X	X										
WABA							X	X	X			
LAMR/ALFL				X	X	X						
LYJO										X	X	X

RESOURCE MANAGER

BEOL/SAND										X	X	
FOLS	X											
PECO/FOUN												X
CAVO												
CHIC						X	X					
WABA				X	X							
LAMR/ALFL		X	X									
LYJO								X	X			

Memorandum

To: Superintendents, Intermountain Region

From: Director, Intermountain Region

Subject: Policies Concerning Administrative Charges to Inventory and Monitoring Funding

Intermountain Region parks and networks will receive more than \$3.6 million dollars for Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) in FY 02, primarily through the Natural Resource Challenge. NPS has committed to spend these funds directly on I&M activities and funding for the Challenge in FY 03 and 04 depends partly on keeping this commitment.

Please carefully review the attached memo from the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, which provides guidance on appropriate administrative costs parks and networks can charge to Inventory and Monitoring funds. The overarching policy “for assistance and support expenditures is that the resources (goods, services, and personnel) that are planned and funded as part of the park’s normal, ongoing ONPS budget may NOT be charged against inventory or park vital signs monitoring funding provided by the Washington Office.” However, some administrative charges are allowed. The rule of thumb is that the total amount of funding allocated to general administrative support and assistance should not be more than 5 percent of the total funding provided to a park or network for inventories or park vital signs monitoring...” Vehicle and leasing costs are specifically addressed in the memo.

Specific guidance:

- Backfilling behind a permanent park employee who is working on I&M projects or programs is permitted by hiring a temporary employee for six months or less. Overtime pay is not authorized.
- Lapse money from vacant I&M funded positions may not be used for anything other than inventories of vital signs monitoring.
- Office space for I&M staff should come from existing space in parks, CESUs, regional offices, etc. If no options exist, leasing office space at local market rates is permitted, not to exceed 5% of total I&M funding.
- Spending I&M funds to renovate existing office space is permitted but must be approved at the Regional level.
- New construction and purchase of space (e.g. trailers) is not permitted.
- Leasing I&M vehicles is permitted.
- Purchase of I&M vehicles is permitted when the total cost is less than the cost to lease a vehicle. Purchase of vehicles must be approved at the Regional level.
- All planned expenditures for biological inventories or vital signs monitoring should be included in each network’s Annual Administrative Report and Workplan, due October 30th each year.

If you have questions or need to discuss administrative costs or any other aspect of the I&M program, please contact Mike Britten, Inventory and Monitoring Coordinator for the Intermountain Region (303-987-6705).

November 30, 2001

N22 (2370)

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Attention: Regional I&M Coordinators

From: Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science /s/

Subject: Policies Concerning Administrative Charges to Inventory and Monitoring Funding

One of the major components of the Natural Resource Challenge (NRC) relates to the inventory and monitoring of natural resources throughout the Service. In fiscal 2000, the Service received a base increase of approximately \$7.3 million for accelerating the completion twelve natural resource inventory data sets being acquired or produced by the Natural Resource Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Program. In fiscal 2001, the I&M Program received an additional base increase of \$4.2 million to begin the implementation of park vital signs monitoring programs. This funding represents a significant step forward for the Service in full implementation of the Natural Resource Challenge. However, to fully implement the park vital signs monitoring component of the Natural Resource Challenge, the Service will need to obtain an additional \$22 million in base increases through fiscal year 2004.

A significant portion of the inventory funds and all of the park vital signs monitoring funds are being transferred annually to regional offices and parks where most of the I&M projects are being formulated and managed. Accountability for the use of those funds rests primarily at the regional or park level. Recently, some regional offices and parks have asked about the appropriateness of charging certain administrative expenses against the inventory and monitoring funds they have received. Understandably, significant increases in staffing or contracting bring with them increased support needs. Challenge increases have also affected the Washington Office in this manner and we understand the issues. However, it is important that the Challenge funding be seen as directly contributing to resource activities and that we can demonstrate this.

Because these inventory and park vital signs monitoring funds represent specific line items in the NRC and have been appropriated by Congress specifically for those purposes, we have a mandate to demonstrate accountability for these funds and to insure that they are used only for the intended inventory and monitoring activities. Evidence of that mandate is shown by the fact that the Service is required to provide a report to Congress during November of each year that details how the funds were used during the previous fiscal year and what planned expenditures are for the upcoming fiscal year. The high level of interest in these funds could lead to audits concerning their use. Any problems with the use of I&M funds will reflect on and affect other funding as well. For these reasons, the Washington Office will closely monitor how inventory and park vital signs monitoring funds are utilized to ensure that the funds are not diverted to inappropriate uses. The purpose of this memo is to provide you with requested guidance on what we believe are appropriate and inappropriate uses of these funds.

Network Implementation Strategy for Inventory and Monitoring

The Service has long recognized the need to conduct comprehensive inventory and monitoring of natural resources in parks. Management policies have been in effect since the 1980's which stipulate that we will undertake inventories of natural resources in park to determine their nature and status and monitor changes in the condition of those resource over time. The scientific information developed through these efforts must provide the basis for any successful natural resource management and preservation program. However, estimates made a few years ago concerning funding needs suggest that perhaps as much as \$200

million would be needed to implement comprehensive inventory and monitoring in all natural resource parks, an amount nearly six times what we hope to obtain through the NRC. Therefore, parks and regions are cautioned that the funding they receive from the Washington Office for inventory and park vital signs monitoring purposes is not designed to fund *all* of the work that needs to be accomplished. Parks and regions should look for ways to supplement these funds from other NPS base accounts or to leverage the funding by exploring cost-sharing opportunities with non-NPS partners and cooperators whenever possible.

To facilitate those cost sharing and leveraging efforts, parks have been organized into 32 networks linked by geography and shared resource characteristics. This arrangement should encourage collaboration, information sharing, and economies of scale in natural resource inventory and monitoring among parks. Each network will receive up to 8-9 new positions and a set amount of funding to conduct inventory and park vital signs monitoring projects. These positions, which should include taxonomic and technical experts, will provide credibility for NPS in its role as managers of plants and animals species. Parks within each network are expected to share these funds and positions as well as administrative workloads and burdens (e.g. processing travel and personnel actions, providing office space and equipment, conducting data management, and maintaining museum records and collections). It may be more efficient or cost-effective to accomplish some of the monitoring through contracts or cooperative agreements, rather than NPS positions. The ability to absorb positions without resulting in a significant administrative burden should be considered in determining where positions should be stationed or whether NPS positions or alternatives are the best strategy to accomplish monitoring.

Each network is managed by a Board of Directors, composed of the superintendents or their designee from each park in the network. Procedures related to the operation and administration of the network and how they plan to share resources and workloads are to be described in a Network Charter signed by all members of the Board of Directors.

Parks needing administrative or logistical support and assistance in order to accomplish their inventory and park vital signs monitoring projects should follow a step down process to satisfy those needs. First, the park should try to work out arrangements with other parks in their network to see if sharing of personnel, vehicles, equipment, or other resources at various times of the year would be offsetting, thus negating any need to assess project funding to meet their needs. Where assistance cannot be fully offset by sharing personnel and resources between parks within the network, the park should coordinate with nearby parks in other networks, other federal and state agencies, or local colleges and universities to see if cooperative arrangements can be made.

Finally, when the above steps have been taken and the required administrative assistance and support needs have not been met, the park or network may consider using a portion of the funding provided by the Washington Office to met the identified need. The following sections briefly describe the types of administrative and support costs that may be allowed. A general guiding philosophy for assistance and support expenditures is that the resources (goods, services, and personnel) that are planned and funded as part of the park's normal, ongoing ONPS budget may NOT be charged against inventory or park vital signs monitoring funding provided by the Washington Office. **As a rule of thumb, the total amount of funding allocated to general administrative support and assistance (discussed below) should not exceed 5 percent of the total funding provided to the network for inventories or park vital signs monitoring (excludes vehicle and leasing costs described below).**

Personnel

Inventory and monitoring in parks and networks must be conducted by individuals (e.g. systematic biologists, physical scientists, data managers) having professional qualifications commensurate with the planned work. Furthermore, in addition to having the necessary professional qualifications, those individuals must be allowed to devote time to working on inventory and monitoring projects. If this policy is not followed, there will likely be a constant tendency to use the I&M personnel to resolve any ongoing or newly identified resource management need in the park. The result could be that the goal of an established,

long-term program of data collection, analysis, and reporting will be jeopardized, eventually resulting in program failure.

Salaries and Benefits for Project Staff – The technical support and staffing needed to conduct inventories and park vital signs monitoring by parks have not been ignored. In addition to providing funding to cover salaries, benefits, and support cost, the Washington Office also provides FTE's so that parks may hire the additional staff they need to conduct inventory and park vital signs monitoring projects. In some instances, these individuals may be asked to devote up to 10 percent of their time assisting with non-I&M duties. However, any non-I&M duties must be directly related to the individual's monitoring expertise and not something totally unrelated. Employees whose regular time is funded from an I&M account should NOT be reassigned to other natural resource duties in the park or network.

Back filling – In some cases, the individual best qualified to provide support for an inventory or park vital signs monitoring project may be an existing member of the park staff but who is assigned to other park operations. Back filling refers to the process of charging salary, benefits, and related support costs to an I&M account for temporary staff hired to cover the duties of permanent park personnel who have been temporarily reassigned to work on an inventory or monitoring project. Back filling authority is hereby granted to allow parks to minimize any disruptions to normal park operations that may occur as a result of these types of temporary personnel reassignments. But, under normal circumstances, back-filling arrangements should not exceed a period of 6 months. Back filling cannot exceed the number of duty hours that would have been worked by the reassigned employee during his/her normal duties. Overtime pay is not authorized.

Vacant Positions – Vacant positions are expected to be a normal part of any long-term inventory and park vital signs monitoring program. But, park supervisors should recognize that, when position vacancies do occur, those positions need to be filled as quickly as possible to minimize the impact on the inventory or monitoring program. Because the hiring process can be slow in some instances, supervisors should have completed most of the advanced work needed to fill the position in the least amount of time. This may include: updating position descriptions, getting approval of position management plans, writing KSA's, maintaining a list of eligible and interested job candidates, preparing cooperative agreements with universities, etc.

When position vacancies do occur, the funding provided by the Washington Office to cover the salary and benefits for those positions may lapse. Those lapsed salary funds may not be used for any project or activity not directly related to the ongoing inventory or park vital signs monitoring project. Position vacancies must be clearly identified in the Annual Administrative Report and Work Plan submitted by the network to the Washington Office. If it becomes apparent that positions are being allowed to remain vacant in an attempt to increase the amount of funding available for other park or network needs, an adjustment may be made in the amount of funding transferred annual to the network.

Administrative Support and Services

In some instances, implementation of inventory and/or park vital signs monitoring programs may increase the workload for various existing park staff including, contracting specialists, program analysts, personnel officers, and secretaries. We believe that parks should be able to address the majority of these additional workload burdens through the network implementation strategy described above. The Washington Office also plans to obtain additional contracting assistance, support which will be available to any park or network needing that assistance. However, if the additional workloads cannot be accommodated by sharing the burden among parks, then a small portion of the funding provided by the Washington Office may be used to meet that need, not to exceed the 5 percent overall limit, as indicated above. Additionally, administrative costs connected with park rangers, law enforcement personnel, or maintenance staff may not be charged to inventory and park vital signs monitoring funding, although direct costs incurred by such staffs in I&M work may be. For example, boat operations connected with monitoring would be an allowable cost; charging a portion of the permanent salaries of maintenance and rangers would not.

Office Space and Equipment

The addition of several new positions to a park or network for inventories or park vital signs monitoring could result in a situation where there is an inadequate amount of office space and/or equipment to accommodate those individuals. Again, the policy is that parks should first try to meet those additional needs by stationing the new positions at various parks in the network or at some other appropriate location, such as a regional office, CESU, or university. However, if the additional space and equipment needs cannot be accommodated in this manner, the network may consider using a portion of the funding provided by the Washington Office to obtain the necessary office space and/or equipment. Office equipment that may be considered includes personal computers and furniture.

When it is necessary to obtain additional office space for new employees assigned to inventory or park vital signs monitoring efforts, parks should first consider remodeling existing space within the park(s). If adequate office space cannot be obtained through renovation efforts, then leasing space should be considered. Under no circumstances will new construction be allowed. The acquisition of permanent housing space (e.g. trailers, etc.) for individuals while in the field is also not approved for inventories. The need for temporary housing in the field for park vital signs monitoring should be addressed in monitoring plans that require approval before funding. Any plans to renovate existing office space or lease new space in a park must be approved in advance by the Regional Office; similar expenses proposed for a regional office must be approved by the Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science. When leasing office space is being considered, evidence must be shown that the anticipated leasing costs are within the normal range for comparable space in the area and that alternative locations are not available. **Costs associated with lease of office space should not exceed five percent of the total funding provided to the network for inventories or park vital signs monitoring (this is in addition to administrative support and assistance costs).**

Vehicles

As in the case of office space and equipment, parks or networks conducting inventories or park vital signs monitoring may need to acquire additional vehicles. Whenever possible, parks should make full utilization of existing vehicles, either owned by the park or leased through GSA. If additional vehicles are required, those vehicles should be leased only for the duration of the project UNLESS the total cost of leasing the vehicle for that period exceeds the vehicle purchase cost. In that instance, vehicle purchase is justified. In general, purchasing vehicles for inventories would not be considered cost-effective, while purchasing vehicles for park vital signs monitoring might be. Parks or networks planning to lease or purchase vehicles to support inventory or park vital signs monitoring crews must obtain prior approval from the Regional Office.

In summary, we think that the policies and guidance outlined above will cover most of the administrative support and needs encountered by parks or networks undertaking either natural resource inventories or park vital signs monitoring. However, if additional needs or situations are identified, those needs should be brought to the attention of Washington Office personnel. The point that needs to be stressed is that parks and networks should make every attempt possible to minimize administrative charges and overhead costs associated with inventories and park vital signs monitoring projects and assess project funding only when necessary. With your continued support and commitment we will have created the Service's first comprehensive systematic inventory and monitoring system. Thank you for your enthusiasm in joining this effort. If you have questions or need additional clarification about these policies, please contact Dr. Gary Williams, the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program Manager on email or at (970) 225-3539.

File Name:I&M OVERHEAD POLICY

FNP:A.Miller:Id:11/8/01

Cc: 2370 Reading File 2370 Chron File Gary William, Abby Miller